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Tuesday
January 6, 2026
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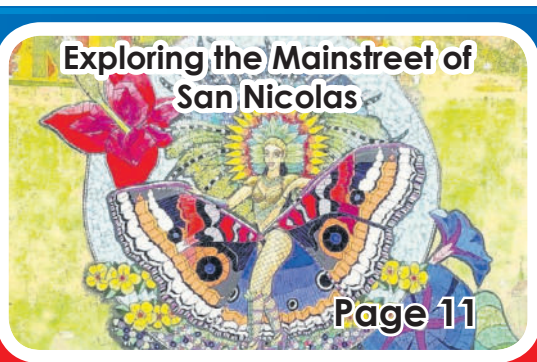

Visit the island's popular cave sites!

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Hegseth censures Sen. Kelly after Democrats' video urging troops to resist unlawful orders

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and MEG KINNARD
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced Monday that he censured Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona over the former Navy pilot's participation in a video that called on troops to resist unlawful orders. Hegseth said the censure by itself simply a formal letter with little practical consequence was "a necessary process step" to proceedings that could result in a demotion from Kelly's retired rank of captain and subsequent reduction in retirement pay. Investigating and now punishing a sitting U.S. senator is an extraordinary move for the Pentagon, which until President Donald Trump's second term had usually gone out of its way to act and appear apolitical. A legal expert says the choice to go after a lawmaker will complicate an already unique case. In a lengthy post on social media, Kelly said he "never expected" what he called an "attack" from Trump and Hegseth, recounting his 25 years of Navy service as well as combat and space missions. Calling Hegseth's move "outrageous" and "un-American," Kelly said he would fight the censure "with everything I've got not for myself, but to send a message back that Pete Hegseth and Donald Trump don't get to decide what Americans in this country get to say about their government."

Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., refutes efforts by President Donald Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to intimidate him and other lawmakers after expressing concerns over U.S. military strikes against vessels suspected of smuggling drugs in the Caribbean, during a news conference at the Capitol, in Washington, Dec. 1, 2025.
Associated Press

Hegseth's action follows video about illegal orders

The censure comes after Kelly participated in a video in November with five other Democratic lawmakers all veterans of the armed services and intelligence community in which they called on troops to uphold the Constitution and defy "illegal orders."

Trump, a Republican, accused the lawmakers of sedition "punishable by DEATH" in a social media post days later. The 90-second video was first posted from Sen. Elissa Slotkin's X account. In it, the six lawmakers Slotkin, Kelly and Reps. Jason Crow, Chris Deluzio, Maggie Goodlander and Chrissy Houlahan speak directly to U.S. service members, whom Slotkin acknowledges are "under enormous stress and pressure right now."

The lawmakers didn't mention specific circumstances. But their message was released amid a series of military attacks on boats accused of smuggling drugs in the Caribbean Sea and the eastern Pacific Ocean and Trump's attempts to deploy National Guard troops to American cities. ❑

U.S. expands list of countries whose citizens must pay up to $15,000 bonds to apply for visas

By MATTHEW LEE **AP Diplomatic Writer**

Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks during a news conference at the State Department, Friday, Dec. 19, 2025, in Washington.
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has added seven countries, including five in Africa, to the list of nations whose passport holders are required to post bonds of up to $15,000 to apply to enter the United States. Thirteen countries, all but two of them in Africa, are now on the list, which makes the process of obtaining a U.S. visa unaffordable for many.

The State Department last week quietly added Bhutan, Botswana, the Central African Republic, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Namibia and Turkmenistan to the list. Those designations took effect on Jan. 1, according to a notice posted on the travel.state.gov website.

It's the latest effort by the Trump administration to tighten requirements for entry to the U.S., including requiring citizens from all countries that require visas to sit for in-person interviews and disclose years of social media histories as well as detailed accounts of their and their families' previous travel and living arrangements.

U.S. officials have defended the bonds, which can range from $5,000 up to $15,000, maintaining they are effective in ensuring that citizens of targeted countries do not overstay their visas. Payment of the bond does not guarantee a visa will be granted, but the amount will be refunded if the visa is denied or when a visa holder demonstrates they have complied with the terms of visa.

The new countries covered by the requirement join Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe, Tanzania, Gambia, Malawi and Zambia, which were all placed on the list in August and October of last year.❑

After judge's ruling, HHS authorized to resume sharing some Medicaid data with deportation officers

By ALI SWENSON
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The nation's health department starting Monday can resume sharing the personal data of certain Medicaid enrollees with deportation officials, according to a federal judge's ruling, in a blow to states that had sued the administration over privacy concerns.

But the judge's decision, issued last Monday, strictly limits the scope of data from the 22 plaintiff states that can be shared for now only allowing the agency to hand over basic biographical information about immigrants residing in the United States illegally.

The states' lawsuit came after an Associated Press report identified the data sharing policy.

The ruling from U.S. District Judge Vince Chhabria in San Francisco comes after the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services said it planned to share the data again as part of the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.

Chhabria in August had initially blocked the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from sharing the personal data, which includes home addresses, with Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers. In December, he extended that temporary order.

Then, last week, Chhabria ruled that after the temporary order expires on Jan. 5, HHS can resume sharing "basic biographical, location and contact information" about immigrants living in the U.S. illegally with Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers. He wrote in a court filing that this sharing "is clearly authorized by law and the agencies have adequately explained their decisions."

While the lawsuit plays out, HHS and CMS aren't allowed to give detailed, sensitive medical information about enrollees to the Department of Homeland Security or ICE, Chhabria wrote. They also can't hand over Medicaid data about U.S. citizens or legal immigrants in the 22 plaintiff states, he wrote.

In explaining why he blocked the broader data sharing, Chhabria wrote that the new federal policies "are totally unclear about what that information would be, why it would be needed for immigration enforcement purposes, and what the risks of sharing it with DHS would be."

It wasn't clear Monday whether HHS had resumed sharing data on Medicaid recipients living in the U.S. illegally, and a spokesperson didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Immigrants illegally living in the U.S., as well as some who are lawfully present, are not allowed to enroll in the Medicaid program that offers nearly free coverage for health services. But federal law requires all states to offer emergency Medicaid, a temporary coverage that pays only for lifesaving services in emergency rooms to anyone, including non-U.S. citizens. Medicaid is a jointly funded program between states and the federal government.❑

The Health and Human Services seal is seen before the news conference of Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. at the Hubert Humphrey Building Auditorium in Washington, Wednesday, April 16, 2025.

Associated Press

U.S.-based multinational companies will be exempt from global tax deal

By FATIMA HUSSEIN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. multinational corporations will be exempted from paying more corporate taxes overseas in a deal finalized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The OECD announced Monday that nearly 150 countries have agreed on the plan, initially crafted in 2021, to stop large global companies from shifting profits to low-tax countries, no matter where they operate in the world.

The amended version excludes large U.S.-based multinational corporations from the 15% global minimum tax after negotiations between President Donald Trump's administration and other members of the Group of Seven wealthy nations. OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said in a statement that the agreement is a "landmark decision in international tax co-operation" and "enhances tax certainty, reduces complexity, and protects tax bases."

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent called the agreement "a historic victory in preserving U.S. sovereignty and protecting American workers and businesses from extraterritorial overreach."

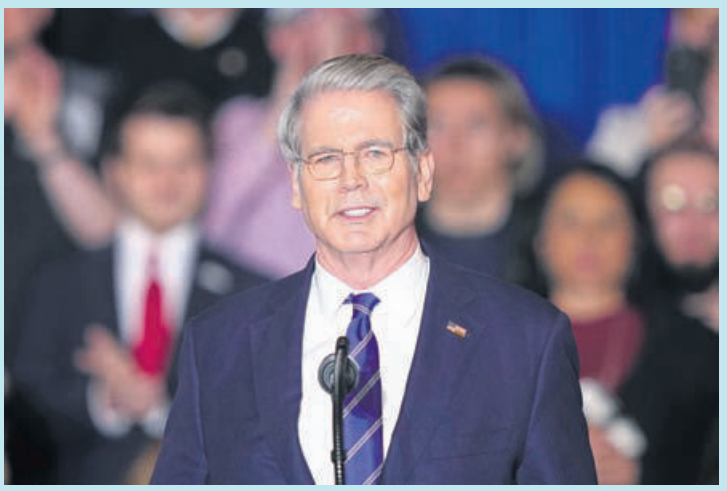
The most recent version of the deal waters down a landmark 2021 agreement that set a minimum global corporate tax of 15%. The idea was to stop multinational corporations, including Apple and Nike, from using accounting and legal maneuvers to shift earnings to low- or no-tax havens.

Those havens are typically places like Bermuda and the Cayman Islands, where the companies actually do little or no business.

Former Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen was a key driver of the 2021 OECD global tax deal and made the corporate minimum tax one of her top priorities. The plan was widely panned by congressional Republicans who said it would make the U.S. less competitive in a global economy.

The Trump administration in June re-negotiated the deal when congressional Republicans rolled back a so-called revenge tax provision from Trump's big tax and spending bill that would have allowed the federal government to impose taxes on companies with foreign owners, as well as on investors from countries judged as charging "unfair foreign taxes" on U.S. companies.

Tax transparency groups have criticized the amended OECD plan.❑



U.S. Department of the Treasury Scott Bessent speaks before President Donald Trump arrives at the Mount Airy Casino Resort in Mount Pocono, Pa., Tuesday, Dec. 9, 2025.

Associated Press

Judge spares Tennessee lawmaker prison time in corruption case where Trump pardoned ex-speaker, aide

Former state Rep. Robin Smith arrives at the federal courthouse April 29, 2025, in Nashville, Tenn.
Associated Press

By JONATHAN MATTISE
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A federal judge on Monday reduced a prison sentence to probation for a former Tennessee lawmaker whose testimony helped convict the former state House speaker and his one-time aide of public corruption.

Although her cohorts were pardoned by President Donald Trump, Republican Rep. Robin Smith had been slated to report to prison for an eight-month sentence. But U.S. District Judge Eli Richardson in Nashville on Monday reduced it to one year of probation.

Smith had been instrumental in helping prosecutors secure convictions against Republican ex-House Speaker Glen Casada and his former aide, Cade Cothren, who along with Smith created a shadowy company to win taxpayer-funded work to send mailings to constituents; she had cut a deal with prosecutors to cooperate in the trial and testify about the scheme.

But about two weeks after Smith was sentenced in late October, Trump pardoned Casada and Cothren, sparing them time behind bars. In September, the judge sentenced Casada to three years in prison and Cothren to 2 1/2 years.

Smith's attorneys had asked the judge to reduce her sentence to probation, saying it would be a "manifest injustice" if she alone went to prison for "collective criminal activity" alongside Casada and Cothren. The U.S. Attorney's Office also favored a change to probation in the case's "narrow circumstances," saying it "has not identified another federal case in which a testifying conspirator reported to prison after an equally culpable conspirator was pardoned."

Smith's attorney also had noted in court filings that he is seeking a presidential pardon for her.

The judge's reason for changing Smith's sentence was filed under seal.

The corruption trial involved activities while Casada was a lawmaker but after he had resigned as speaker in 2019 following a no-confidence vote by fellow Republicans due to swirling scandals. Cothren had stepped down in 2019 from his job amid allegations.

Government prosecutors said that Cothren launched a company called Phoenix Solutions with the knowledge and support of Casada and Smith.

The three claimed the company was run by a "Matthew Phoenix," and the companies controlled by Casada and Smith received roughly $52,000 in taxpayer money in 2020 from a program used by lawmakers to send mailings to constituents.

A "Matthew Phoenix" signature ended up on an IRS tax document. The goal was to use the state-funded work to launch into more lucrative business opportunities, according to prosecutors.❑

Florida awaiting federal approval for 3rd immigration detention center

By MIKE SCHNEIDER
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Florida is awaiting approval from federal officials to open a third immigration detention center, following "Alligator Alcatraz" and "Deportation Depot," and the state also is looking into a potential fourth detention facility, Gov. Ron DeSantis said Monday.

Florida officials were waiting for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to sign off on the third detention center in the state's Panhandle, DeSantis said at a news conference outside the facility which was Florida's second immigration detention center, dubbed "Deportation Deport," at the former Baker Correctional Institution in northeast Florida.

"So, if they approve, we will open," DeSantis said. "If they don't, then we will stand by, and that's fine. But I think it should be approved since I don't think they're where they need to be on detention space."

The governor said there was "another option potentially" in South Florida, where state officials already have constructed an immigration detention center dubbed "Alligator Alcatraz" at a remote airstrip in the Florida Everglades.

When asked by email about the specific locations of the two potential detention facilities, DeSantis press secretary Molly Best said the Panhandle location would be announced once it's approved by federal officials.

"Until this and the proposed additional South Florida location have been approved and finalized, we are unable to provide additional details. Stay tuned!" Best said.

DeSantis said that there had been 10,000 arrests of people in the U.S. illegally in Florida during the past year through a state initiative with federal law enforcement, and that local law enforcement had made an additional 10,000 arrests for a total of 20,000 arrests. Under the state initiative, 63% of those arrested had a criminal arrest or conviction, DeSantis said.

Fence and towers at the Baker Correctional Institution, Sanderson, Fla., Thursday, Aug. 14, 2025.
Associated Press

Florida has led other states in constructing facilities to support President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown, with DeSantis saying the Trump administration needs the additional capacity to hold and deport more immigrants. The Trump administration has trumpeted the Republican governors' efforts to expand their immigration detention capacity, calling Florida's partnership a model for other state-run holding facilities.

Attorneys for detainees at the Everglades facility have called the conditions deplorable, writing in court documents that rainwater floods their tents and officers go cell-to-cell pressuring detainees to sign voluntary removal orders before they're allowed to consult their attorneys.❑

Venezuelan government seeks to show it is operating free from U.S. control

By REGINA GARCIA CANO
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — The Venezuelan government on Monday sought to show its people and the world that the country is being run independently and not controlled by the United States following its stunning weekend arrest of Nicolás Maduro, the authoritarian leader who had ruled for almost 13 years.

Lawmakers aligned with the ruling party, including Maduro's son, gathered in the capital, Caracas, to follow through with a scheduled swearing-in ceremony of the National Assembly for a term that will last until 2031. Delcy Rodríguez, who served as vice president to Maduro and has vowed to work with the Trump administration, was sworn in as interim president. She was sworn in by her brother, Jorge Rodríguez, who was reelected as speaker.

"I come with sorrow for the suffering inflicted upon the Venezuelan people following an illegitimate military aggression against our homeland," she said with her right hand up.

Venezuelan lawmakers gave speeches focused on condemning Maduro's capture Saturday by U.S. forces. "If we normalize the kidnapping of a head of state, no country is safe. Today, it's Venezuela. Tomorrow, it could be any nation that refuses to submit," Maduro's son, Nicolás Maduro Guerra, said at the legislative palace in his first public appearance since Saturday. "This is not a regional problem. It is a direct threat to global political stability." Maduro Guerra, also known as "Nicolasito," demanded that his father and stepmother, Cilia Flores, be returned to the South American country and called on international support. Maduro Guerra, the deposed leader's only son, also denounced being named as a co-conspirator in the federal indictment charging his father and Flores. While Venezuelan lawmakers met, Maduro made his first court appearance in a U.S. courtroom on the narco-terrorism charges the Trump administration used to justify capturing him and taking him to New York. Maduro declared himself "innocent" and a "decent man" as he pleaded not guilty to federal drug-trafficking charges.

The U.S. seized Maduro and Flores in a military operation Saturday, capturing them in their home on a military base. President Donald Trump said the U.S. would "run" Venezuela temporarily, but Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Sunday that it would not govern the country day-to-day other than enforcing an existing " oil quarantine." Rubio said the U.S. was using pressure on Venezuela's oil industry as a way to push for policy changes. "We expect to see that there will be changes, not just in the way the oil industry is run for the benefit of the people, but also so that they stop the drug trafficking," Rubio said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

On Sunday, Rodríguez said Venezuela is seeking "respectful relations" with the U.S., a shift from a more defiant tone she struck in the immediate aftermath of Maduro's capture. "We invite the US government to collaborate with us on an agenda of cooperation oriented towards shared development within the framework of international law to strengthen lasting community coexistence," Rodríguez said in a statement. ❑

Government supporters demand President Nicolas Maduro's release from U.S. custody during a protest in Caracas, Venezuela, Sunday, Jan. 4, 2026.

Associated Press

5-year-old and her uncle killed in airstrike in Gaza as Israel says it targeted an imminent threat

By WAFAA SHURAFA and SALLY ABOU ALJOUD
Associated Press

DEIR AL BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An Israeli strike in Gaza on Monday hit a tent housing displaced people, killing a 5-year-old girl and her uncle and wounding two other children, hospital officials said.

The strike took place in the Muwasi area northwest of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, officials at Nasser Hospital said. The Associated Press couldn't independently verify those details. Family members wept over the bodies as they were brought to the hospital.

The dead are among the more than 400 people killed in Gaza since an October ceasefire began, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

The Israeli military said on social media it struck a Hamas militant who planned an imminent attack on Israeli troops in the southern Gaza Strip. It said the strike complied with the ceasefire agreement, and was done in a targeted way to mitigate civilian harm.

It was not immediately clear if the statement referred to the fatal tent strike. The military also said that, because of continued ceasefire violations, it had begun striking Hezbollah and Hamas terror targets in southern and eastern Lebanon.

The strikes came a few days before Lebanon's army commander is scheduled to brief the government on its mission of disarming Hezbollah in areas along the border with Israel.

Israel and the Lebanese militant group exchanged fire for over a year before reaching a ceasefire in November 2024. Israel continues to control small parts of Lebanese territory and has continued to carry out strikes, accusing the group of trying to rearm.

Earlier on Monday, the Gaza Health Ministry reported that two other bodies had been brought to local hospitals over the past 24 hours. The ministry, part of the Hamas-run government, said that 422 bodies have been brought to hospitals since the ceasefire went into effect on Oct. 10.

The ministry maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts.❑

Palestinians walk through the ruins of destroyed buildings as the sun sets over Gaza City, Sunday, Jan. 4, 2026.

Associated Press

Holocaust survivor Eva Schloss, stepsister of Anne Frank, dies at 96

By JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Auschwitz survivor Eva Schloss, the stepsister of teenage diarist Anne Frank and a tireless educator about the horrors of the Holocaust, has died. She was 96.

The Anne Frank Trust UK, of which Schloss was honorary president, said she died Saturday in London, where she lived.

Britain's King Charles III said he was "privileged and proud" to have known Schloss, who co-founded the charitable trust to help young people challenge prejudice.

"The horrors that she endured as a young woman are impossible to comprehend and yet she devoted the rest of her life to overcoming hatred and prejudice, promoting kindness, courage, understanding and resilience through her tireless work for the Anne Frank Trust UK and for Holocaust education across the world," the king said.

Eva Schloss, the stepsister of Anne Frank and a Holocaust survivor, attends a news conference in Newport Beach, Calif. Thursday, March 7, 2019.

Associated Press

Born Eva Geiringer in Vienna in 1929, Schloss fled with her family to Amsterdam after Nazi Germany annexed Austria. She became friends with another Jewish girl of the same age, Anne Frank, whose diary would become one of the most famous chronicles of the Holocaust.

Like the Franks, Eva's family spent two years in hiding to avoid capture after the Nazis occupied the Netherlands. They were eventually betrayed, arrested and sent to the Auschwitz death camp.

Schloss and her mother Fritzi survived until the camp was liberated by Soviet troops in 1945. Her father Erich and brother Heinz died in Auschwitz.

After the war, Eva moved to Britain, married German Jewish refugee Zvi Schloss and settled in London.

In 1953, her mother married Frank's father, Otto, the only member of his immediate family to survive. Anne Frank died of typhus in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp at the age of 15, months before the end of the war. Schloss did not speak publicly about her experiences for decades, later saying that wartime trauma had made her withdrawn and unable to connect with others.

"I was silent for years, first because I wasn't allowed to speak. Then I repressed it. I was angry with the world," she told The Associated Press in 2004.

But after she addressed the opening of an Anne Frank exhibition in London in 1986, Schloss made it her mission to educate younger generations about the Nazi genocide. Over the following decades she spoke in schools and prisons, at international conferences and told her story in books including "Eva's Story: A Survivor's Tale by the Stepsister of Anne Frank."

She kept campaigning into her 90s. In 2019, she traveled to Newport Beach, California to meet teenagers who were photographed making Nazi salutes at a high school party. The following year she was part of a campaign urging Facebook to remove Holocaust-denying material from the social networking site. "We must never forget the terrible consequences of treating people as 'other,'" Schloss said in 2024. "We need to respect everybody's races and religions. We need to live together with our differences. The only way to achieve this is through education, and the younger we start the better."

Schloss' family remembered her as "a remarkable woman: an Auschwitz survivor, a devoted Holocaust educator, tireless in her work for remembrance, understanding and peace."❑

Founder of Indonesian ride-hailing app Gojek stands trial over Chromebooks procurement

By TATAN SYUFLANA and NINIEK KARMINI
Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — An Indonesian court on Monday opened the trial of a co-founder of the country's ride-hailing and payments company Gojek, who is accused of corruption in a government project to procure Google Chromebook laptops for schools.

Nadiem Anwar Makarim, 41, was a former education, culture, research and technology minister when he was arrested Sept. 7. His arrest came during an investigation by the attorney general's office in Jakarta into an alleged $125 billion corruption scandal linked to the project.

The laptop procurement initiated under the government's "digitalization of schools" policy aimed to equip schools in remote areas with digital devices and infrastructure.

Nadiem Anwar Makarim, the co-founder of Indonesia's payments platform and ride hailing company Gojek and former education minister, reacts as he enters the courtroom for his first trial hearing at the Corruption Court in Jakarta, Indonesia, Monday, Jan. 5, 2026.

Associated Press

Makarim, who was education minister between 2019 and 2024, allegedly favored Google's Chromebook despite a ministry research team refusing to recommend the laptop model due to ineffectiveness in regions lacking internet access.

The indictment claims Makarim steered the nationwide procurement in 2020–2021 "entirely for personal business interests." Prosecutors said he pressed Google to invest in PT Aplikasi Karya Anak Bangsa, known as PT AKAB.

The company is the parent of Gojek.

Makarim received about 809 billion rupiah ($48.2 million) in connection with the program, prosecutors claimed. He faces a possible sentence of life imprisonment for causing state losses and misusing public funds under Indonesia's 2001 Corruption Law.

"The procurement ignored proper pricing benchmarks and technical needs, especially for remote or under-resourced regions," lead prosecutor Muhammad Fadli Paramajeng told a panel of three judges at Jakarta's Corruption Court on Monday.

The purchase of more than 1.2 million Chromebooks was designed to strengthen Google's dominance in Indonesia's education tech ecosystem and linked to subsequent Google investments of about $787 million in PT AKAB through Google Asia Pacific, he said.❑

Visit the island's popular cave sites!

(Oranjestad)—Among the endless sea of dark brown sand and cacti, there are two caves hidden in the outskirts of San Nicolas, in the north-eastern area of the island. These caves, The Quadiriki cave and The Fontein Cave are open to visitors of the Arikok National Park, so if you ever decide to take an "off-road" tour in the park, be sure to visit these prehistoric caves.

Quadirikiri Cave

Known for its two chambers accompanied by a skylight, the Quadikiri Cave is the most popular cave among locals and tourists, as it is easy to walk through and provides great lighting for pictures.

Woman in Quadirikiri Cave, Arikok National Park, Aruba

As with all prehistoric or ancient sites, there is always a folk legend that adds to the lore and mystery of the site. The Quadirikiri cave is no different. The most well-known legend behind the cave could be considered as Aruba's first love story, as it tells the tale of the undying love between the chief's daughter and her beloved. As legend would have it, the chief disapproved of his daughter's choice of lover, as he thought him unworthy. Stubborn and filled with anger, the daughter refused to turn away her beloved.

So, the chief decided to lock her up in the Quadirikiri Cave, in hopes that she would soon calm down and turn away her lover. Her beloved, in turn, was locked away in the Tunnel of Love (Now known as the Huliba Cave).

Through the pathways underneath the Tunnel of Love running up to the Quadiriki cave, the two love bird found each other, and refused to let each other go. Because of their stubbornness, they both died in the Quadiriki Cave, their ascending spirits burning two holes in the ceiling of the cave. This is why the cave has two holes through which sunlight passes through to illuminate the chamber.

Though there have been discoveries of Amerindian drawing on the wall, these have mostly been ruined by vandalism. However, the Fontein Cave further up north, provides a better glimpse in prehistoric Amerindian paintings.

Fontein Cave

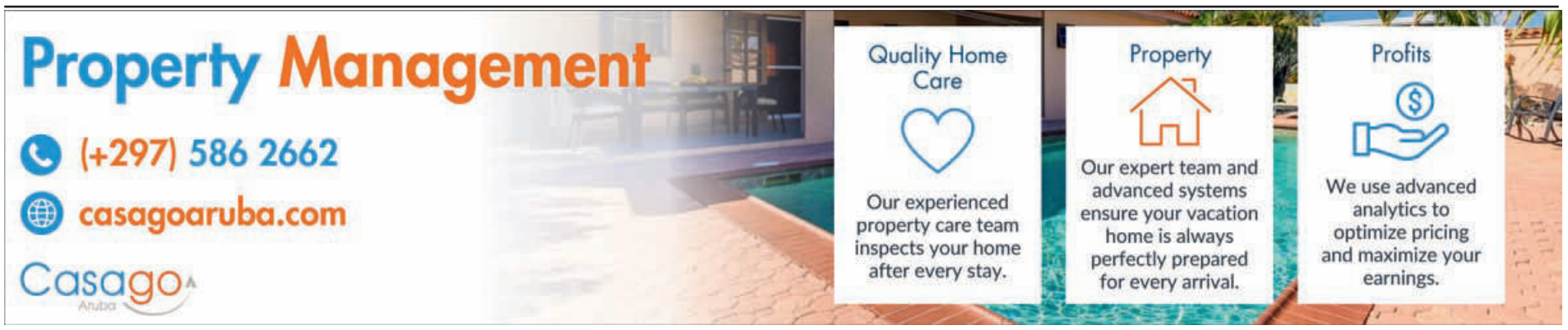
Longer than the Quadirikiri Cave, the Fontein Cave contains pathways that stretch to the limestone walls further down. Here is also where prehistoric drawings can be seen. Though this cave does not have its own legend, this was speculated to have been occupied—or at least used by prehistoric Arawak settlers on the island for rituals and other spiritual ceremonies.

The Huliba Cave/ Tunnel of Love

The Huliba Cave, formerly known as the Tunnel of Love, was once open to the public, and was the biggest and most accessible of all three caves. This cave had five chambers, including one that is heart-shaped. This cave had narrow stairs that led to long pathways deep into the cave, with a staircase leading to the exit on the other side. In one of the chambers, there used to be the carving of the Virgin Mary, put there for the protection of the cave.

However, the Huliba Cave has been permanently closed for a few years now, as a way to preserve the bat population that lives in the cave. These Long Tongue Fruit Bats and Insect Eater Bats are very important to the ecosystem of the island. Though this cave is no longer accessible to the public, it surely is interesting to learn more about the history of these caves and the Arawak tribes that resided or utilized them.

Do note that these caves are very dark, humid, hot, and are inhabited by bats. Do wear comfortable clothing and shoes, as the pathways in these caves may be rough and bumpy. Take care to not disturb the bats' habitat.❑



Casago Aruba:

Redefining Island Stays with Full-Service Property Management

Casago Aruba was born from a shared passion for elevating the island's tourism experience. Built on a strong foundation of service, hospitality, and a keen eye for quality, the Casago team—backed by over 16 years of experience in the vacation rental and hospitality industry—is on a mission to redefine what luxury and convenience look like for travelers visiting Aruba.

But Casago is more than just a vacation rental platform. It is a **full-service property management company**, offering seamless experiences for both guests and homeowners alike. While travelers benefit from handpicked accommodations and personalized service, homeowners gain a reliable partner dedicated to the care and performance of their property.

A Stay Tailored to You

Casago Aruba offers more than just stylish villas. Their curated portfolio includes a **wide variety of condos, homes, and villas** in different sizes to suit all types of travelers—from solo adventurers and couples to large families and groups. Every stay is backed by local expertise, with concierge support, 24/7 guest assistance, and an attention to detail that consistently exceeds expectations.

Whether you're here to relax on world-famous beaches, explore Aruba's cultural gems, or discover hidden corners of the island, Casago Aruba ensures your getaway is as smooth as it is memorable.

A Partner for Homeowners

Behind the scenes, Casago offers a robust suite of property management services designed to help homeowners **maximize rental income** while minimizing stress. Services include:

- **Promotion** through Casago's professional booking platform and expert local marketing strategies
- **Complete management** of check-ins, guest communication, cleanings, landscaping, pool maintenance, and repairs
- **Transparent maintenance** reporting, real-time reservation tracking, and on-site security monitoring
- **Full handling** of tax filings for both local and state requirements
- **Monthly property inspections** and full utility bill management
- **Strategic planning** to help homeowners increase profitability and keep their properties in top condition

This full-service model ensures that every home is maintained to the highest standard while giving property owners full peace of mind.

Rooted in Community and Sustainability

What truly sets Casago Aruba apart is their commitment

to the local community and to sustainable practices. The team works closely with local businesses and artisans, promotes eco-conscious travel, and supports initiatives that contribute positively to the island's environment and economy.

As one of the fastest-growing vacation rental and property management companies on the island, Casago Aruba continues to expand its footprint—welcoming more travelers, partnering with more homeowners, and raising the standard of hospitality in Aruba.❑

Dining in? Try making some local favorites!

How to make "pan bati"

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever up for an Aruban snack, try making another Aruban classic appetizer called Pan Bati. Similar to a pancake both in appearance and cooking, this is a super easy meal that adults and children will both enjoy. Here's how to make it!

Ingredients:
2 cups of all purpose flour
1 cup grams of fine cornmeal
2 tbsp baking powder
1 1/3 cup of milk
1 pinch of salt
2 tbsp of granulated sugar
Oil for cooking

Instructions:
Add all the dry ingredients in a bowl first, and stir until well mixed. Then add the milk and beat until reached a pancake-like consistency. If more moister is needed, add some water until reached desired consistency.

In a hot pan with oil, pour in enough batter to cover the bottom of the pan. Just like pancakes, flip the pan bati when one side turns golden brown. When your pan bati is ready, place on a plate and cover with a clean kitchen towel.

Traditionally, pan bati is cut in triangle pieces, and is often eaten as a side dish with soup, fried fish or stews. However, it is also casually enjoyed

with some butter and cheese on top!❑

Weekly Free Slot or Table Play for all qualified Club members.

2X Double Point Tuesday!

Earn DOUBLE POINTS all day long!
Use your Players' Club card to play our slots and we'll DOUBLE your points!

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Birds of Aruba

ORANJESTAD — On May 11th, 2010, the Aruba Birdlife Conservation was founded with the aim of protecting the biodiversity in general and birds in and around Aruba in particular.

Among other things, the foundation will focus on increasing the survival chances of species of wild birds by promoting their preservation and conservation. The foundation publishes the most beautiful pictures of local birds on their social media that show us the beauty of Aruba's birds and nature in general. Aruba Today gives you a little peek with the following pictures and descriptions from the foundations Facebook page.

The Great Egret
Serenity in Aruba's National Park, a Great Egret flying in peace. When it is peaceful and quite, beautiful things start happening in nature.

Canadian in the house
The breeding season is over and it's getting pretty cold in North America. Shore birds have started moving southwards as early as July. This wetland beauty wants to keep its toes warm. Our Canadian friends know exactly where they can do so best. A Greater Yellowlegs rediscovering Aruba's Bubali Wetlands.

Cabochon
In its living form of so much more value than any gemstone. Aruba's smallest and most master of flight. A top pollinator. A hovering Blenchi inspecting the human who just entered his territory. English: Blue-tailed Emerald (male) Dutch: Blauwstaartsmaragdkolibrie (mannetje).

Aruba's to enjoy. Aruba's to protect.❑

Aruba to me: "We recommend the happiest place—Aruba"

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is ……. Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.
Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from two lovely visitors.

They wrote to us saying: Aruba to me: "If you have to be stranded somewhere, we recommend the happiest place—Aruba!"

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers!❑

Surf's Up: Favorite places to catch waves in Aruba

ORANJESTAD – Whether you are a salt-seasoned surfer looking for a thrill, or just looking to wet your toes in a little ocean adventure, Aruba has amazing places to learn and practice surfing! Although more known for the calmer waters of Palm Beach, Eagle Beach and Mangel Halto, Aruba also has some special places to thrill your senses. Because of strong winds and breezes, Aruba is perfect for wind and kite surfing. You will surely notice kites in the air as you drive around the wilder, rougher areas on Aruba's east side.

There are plenty of surf shop rentals to help you with your gear, and there are also a lot of tutors if you're looking to try for the first time and need a little help. These can be found around the island, and will surely come in hand if you want to try a new experience!

With that said, here are Aruba's favorite surf spots!

Andicuri

Andicuri is recognized as the best place for body boarding. Because of the rough waves, this beach is better suited for those with more experience in surfing. However, the beach with two bluffs – one on each side – is worth a visit, if only to watch the exciting show presented by the surfers.

To go to Andicuri, you will need a 4×4 vehicle and drive from the ex-Natural Bridge Center. Alternatively, you can make it an adventure by going on a hike! The scenery is unique and beautiful on its own.

Reaching Andicuri Beach can be an adventure in itself, as it can be difficult to find and is only accessible by 4×4 vehicle or walking from the ex-Natural Bridge center, but the impressive scenery makes it all worthwhile!

Arashi

Arashi, a beach located close to the California Lighthouse, is a good spot for learning and having fun – if you're lucky! The waves at Arashi are usually calm, but with just the right weather, a swell forms attracting all the local surfers to the area.

Boca Grandi

Boca Grandi is at the most southern spot in Aruba, and is a popular spot with experienced surfers. Close to the famous Red Anchor and our beloved Sunrise City – San Nicolas, a trip to Boca Grandi can easily turn into an all-day trip to this area of the island. With a beautiful beach (although it is not allowed to swim here, because of strong currents), you can enjoy a relaxing time combing the beach for driftwood, coral, and little crabs and snails.

Hadicurari

Here is where you will find most of the action for surfers in Aruba. With a variety of surf shops and schools in this area, you will find it easy to get in on the action. Hadicurari is also the site of the Aruba Hi Winds World Challenge, which takes place usually in June/July, and it is the largest windsurfing competition in the Caribbean!

Malmok

If you're a beginner, this is your spot. There are also various shops to rent gear and receive lessons, facilitating learning and just trying out a new experience. The beach is also popular for paddleboarding and other watersport activities.❑

Ever heard of the cah'i orgel? A key instrument in Aruban folklore music

(Oranjestad)— The cah'i orgel music box is an important and unique instrument that is used on the ABC islands in the Dutch Caribbean. This instrument is a staple in our folklore music, and its significance in the traditions of Aruba has and continues to bring together the old and young.

The origin of the cah'i orgel is said to have come from Europe around 150 years ago. A cross breed between the barrel piano and the organ, the most popular stories said that the instrument came from either England or Germany, but made its way to Italy down to Venezuela, where in 1881, Mr. Horatio Sprock (1866-1949) from Curacao was first introduced to it. After that, Sprock made his own cah'i orgel "Josefina", and successfully debuted it on the streets of Barquisimeto. Back in Curacao, he started his own cah'i orgel business along with his brother Luis. In Aruba, it is said that the cah'i orgel was introduced by Rufo Wever, who later in his career became one of the composers for the Aruban national anthem.

Rufo Wever was a young musician in 1937 when he established his own cah'i orgel business on the island. Before that he experimented with his uncle's cah'i orgel, and he over the years he learned to build and repair the instrument. In fact, he was incredibly skilled in this, and he was one of the few to have recognized from the start that the cah'i orgel is an instrument that needs preserving.

As mentioned, the cah'i orgel is a music box. Made from mahogany wood, it contains a cylinder with a maximum of eight music pieces. By rotating the lever on the front side of the box, the cah'i orgel produces music similar to that of a piano, and is accompanied often by someone else playing the "wiri", a percussion instrument made out of steel and reminiscent to the Spanish guiro. Back then, you would often also find someone playing the

triangle alongside the cah'i orgel and wiri. In Aruba, the cah'i orgel and wiri is used for traditional music genres, such as the Aruban waltz, tumba, mazurka and more. Fun fact: another name for the cah'i orgel is the "tingilingi box."❑

Source: "E Cilinder Magico entre Aruba y Curaçao" by Marilyn Alcalá-Wallé, Herta Parabirsing-Balentina and Nidia Rosaria-Wallé.

Exploring the Mainstreet of San Nicolas

SAN NICOLAS— At Just 11 miles southeast from Oranjestad you will enter the city San Nicolas, also known as Sunrise City or Chocolate City. A city that is rich in authentic culture and island charm. San Nicolas is Aruba's second largest city and was once a bustling company town dominated by the oil industry since the early 1930's.

Over the course of four decades, its demographics had changed immensely due to a stream of Afro-Caribbean and South American workers who came to fill the jobs in the oil refinery between the 1920's until the 1960's. To this day traces of the multicultural influences in culinary offerings and customs, housing and population are clearly visible in San Nicolas – more than anywhere else on the island.

Flow of history

If you are looking for history San Nicolas has it.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower in San Nicolas and narrates Aruba's industrial history which began in the 19th century. Here you will learn about gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and the tourism industries which made San Nicolas once a bustling business center. Experience the touching stories of those who were part of this history.

The Community Museum holds a remarkable collection that spans millennia. Ancient fossils stand next to tableaus of an authentically recreated colonial kitchen and bedroom and 19th-century barbershop, just to name a few of the items of old-time Aruba that has been preserved. A collection of artifacts and other objects of artistic, cultural, historical, or scientific importance can be found here for the purpose of education or enjoyment.

The new San Nicolas

In the shadow of the refinery, an art capital is quietly beginning to grow. This is the new San Nicolas, a place that is starting to become a magnet for all that is young, cool and hip in Aruba. Indeed, San Nicolas has all of the ingredients of an emerging cultural hub — varied history, interesting architecture, and, perhaps most importantly, an urban layout that makes it walkable. As you walk around, the streets are silent but the walls are loud, filled with bright, colorful murals painted by a collection of artists from around the world. ❑

Lessons from our elders: Plants and fruits for medicinal use

ORANJESTAD—Though western medicine is now widely used for common illnesses and to keep our bodies healthy and happy, it is still very common in every household in Aruba (and around the world) to have staple home remedies that is passed on through generations. Here are some tips that our elders have passed on to us over the years.

Pineapple

Pineapple has more uses than topping it on your Christmas ham. According to elders, the skin of a pineapple is great to use to refresh your body. Clean the skin thoroughly and make tea or warapa* with it. It is said that this tea can also be drank after an operation on the ovaries or uterus. This gets rid of irritation and inflammation.

Arrowroot

Arrowroot is native to tropical America and can be sold as a powder or whole. It is said that you can take arrowroot powder and make a "shalup" (porridge) for stomach pain or when you're feeling weak. You can make it with milk too, but it is advised to best use just water. You can also add prunes for a bit of sweetness. Arrowroot shalup is also good to treat an unhealthy gut or for diarrhea.

To make arrowroot shalup, boil a bit of water and add one tablespoon of arrowroot powder and stir continuously until you reach porridge consistency. If you make a shalup with milk, add a pinch of salt. Raw arrowroot powder can be used to powder babies.

Eggplant/Aubergine

Eggplants, or aubergines, are easy to find in supermarkets around the world and can be grown all year round on the island. Related to potato and tomato, eggplants are good to calm nerves. It can also be used to lower blood pressure, by steeping its leaves in boiled water and drinking it. You can also make eggplant juice to help purify your blood. However, do make sure to drink slowly; let it mix with your spit and then swallow.

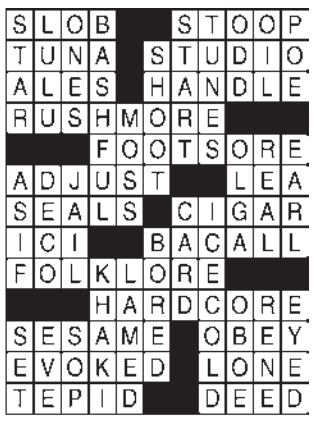
Eggplant kataplan* can also be used to treat skin tumors, abscesses and hemorrhoids. Eggplant kataplan can also be used externally to treat arthritis.❑

***warapa: term referring to a water and sugar solution, a.k.a simple syrup.**
***kataplan: porridge-like mixture used externally for wounds or parts of the body that are painful or swollen.**

ARUBA TODAY

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

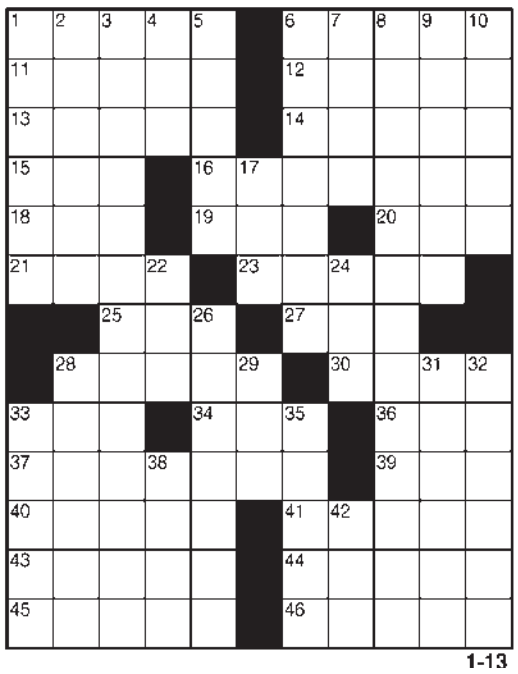


ACROSS

1 Mongoose foe
6 Dark fur
11 Bars on cars
12 Makes sound
13 Swindles
14 Physics bits
15 Pouchlike part
16 Door-opening phrase
18 Tick off
19 Puppy sound
20 Sine qua —
21 Goblet part
23 Nation on the Red Sea
25 Agreeable answer
27 Singer Orbison
28 Harvests
30 Test version
33 Curtain holder
34 Saloon order
36 — Moines
37 Napoleon, for one
39 Motorist's buy
40 Spa treatments
41 Poker ploy
43 Wipe off
44 Snowy wader
45 Also-ran
46 Block-heads

DOWN

1 Currant liqueur
2 Rustic transport
3 "Imma Be" band
4 Sleep state
5 Test for purity
6 Ticket seller, of a sort
7 Lot buy
8 Van Morrison hit of 1967
9 "The Apart-ment" actor
10 German steel city
17 Put down
22 "Cry — River"
24 Unruly crowd
26 Less dense
28 Horror director George
29 Start for pitch or mo
31 China collection
32 Useful skills
33 Drive off
35 Blundered
38 Different
42 Previously



1-13

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

1-13 CRYPTOQUOTE

KHWA XAPVPQS EGAEWLVSFQEPV JHQ'S JPSPALGQP TZPAP KHW EFQ NH. SZPK LPAPCK JPSPALGQP TZPAP KHW VSFAS. — QGJH BWIPGQ

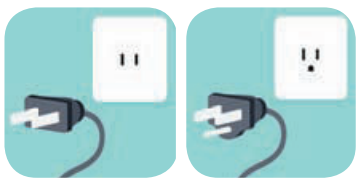
Cryptoquote: I DON'T KNOW WHERE I'M GOING FROM HERE, BUT I PROMISE I WON'T BORE YOU. — DAVID BOWIE

Cruise ship Schedule: Jan. 03 - 07 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
SAT	03	AIDAPERLA	09.00	21.00	C	1
SUN	04	*FREEWINDS - Dept.*	****	22.30	E	-
MON	05	EUROPA 2	08.00	18.00	B	1
		VALIANT LADY	09.00	19.00	C	1
TUE	06	SEABOUR OVATION	07.00	21.00	C	1
WED	07	CARIBBEAN PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	B	1
		BRILLIANT LADY	10.00	22.00	C	1
		NORWEGIAN SKY	11.00	20.00	I	1
		FREEWINDS	06.00	****	E	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basicbut important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 8 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

		1	4		9		3	
	9		2	7			1	
		7			5		8	9
4						8		
		8						4
6	1	5		4	2			3
7	3		9					8
1	8	4		2	3		7	6
9	5		7			3		2

Difficulty: ★★ 1/6

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Answer to previous puzzle

8	1	2	4	9	7	6	3	5
3	9	5	6	8	1	4	7	2
4	6	7	2	5	3	1	8	9
9	7	3	5	1	8	2	6	4
5	2	6	7	3	4	9	1	8
1	4	8	9	2	6	3	5	7
2	5	1	3	7	9	8	4	6
7	8	4	1	6	2	5	9	3
6	3	9	8	4	5	7	2	1

Difficulty: ★ 1/5

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In this Feb. 7, 2018 file photo, a nurse prepares a flu shot at the Salvation Army in Atlanta.

Associated Press

Flu season surged in the US over the holiday and already rivals last winter's harsh epidemic

By MIKE STOBBE
AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. flu infections surged over the holidays, and health officials are calling it a severe season that is likely to get worse.

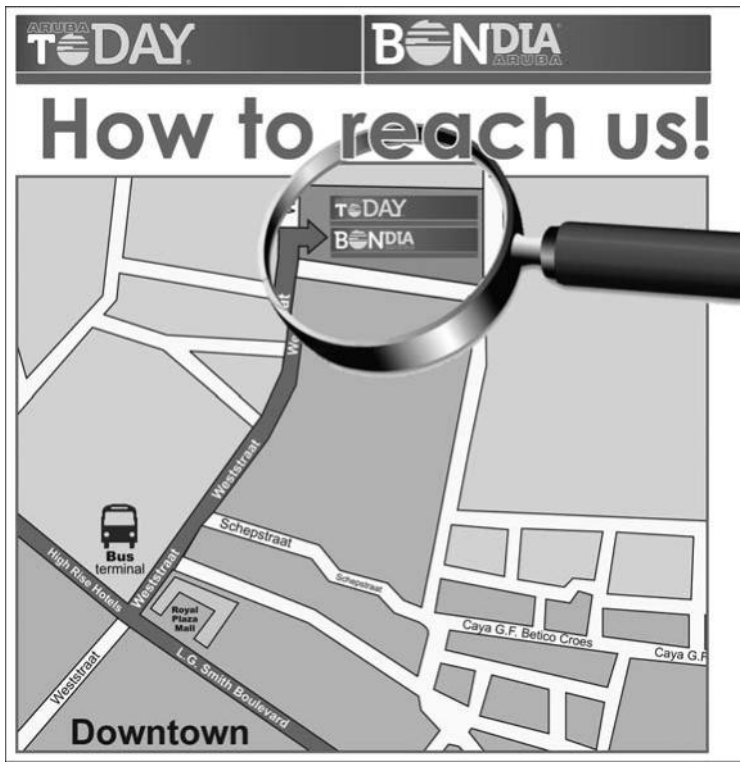
New government data posted Monday for flu activity through the week of Christmas showed that by some measures this season is already surpassing the flu epidemic of last winter, one of the harshest in recent history.

The data was released the same day that the Trump administration said it will no longer recommend flu shots and some other types of vaccines for all children.

Forty-five states were reporting high or very high flu activity during the week of Christmas, up from 30 states the week before.

The higher numbers appear to be driven by the type of flu that's been spreading, public health experts say.

One type of flu virus, called A H3N2, historically has caused the most hospitalizations and deaths in older people. So far this season, that's the type most frequently reported. Even more concerning, more than 90% of the H3N2 infections analyzed were a new version known as the subclade K variant that differs from the strain in this year's flu shots.❑



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Eagle beach
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220051

HEALTH

DOCTOR ON DUTY

Oranjestad

Hospital 7:00 pm / 10:00pm
Tel. 527 4000

San Nicolas

Imsan 24 hours
Tel.524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad:
Oduber: Tel.585 8028
San Nicolas:
Aloe: Tel.584 4606

OTHER

Dental Clinic 587 9850
Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
+297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	**100**
Oranjestad	**527 3140**
Noord	**527 3200**
Sta. Cruz	**527 2900**
San Nicolas	**584 5000**
Police Tipline	**11141**
Ambulancia	**911**
Fire Dept.	**115**
Red Cross	**582 2219**

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	**587 5900**
Prof. Taxi	**588 0035**
Taxi D.T.S.	**587 2300**
Taxi Serv. Aruba	**583 3232**
A1 Taxi Serv.	**280 2828**

TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	**524 2424**
American Airlines	**582 2700**
Avianca	**588 0059**
Jet Blue	**588 2244**
Surinam	**582 7896**

AID FOUNDATIONS

Aruba Food Bank
Tel. 588 0002

FAVI- Visually Impaired
Tel. 582 5051

Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952

Narcotics Anonymous
Tel. 583 8989

Fundacion Contra Violencia Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888

Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

General Info

Phone Directory Tel. 118

Why home maintenance deserves a spot in the annual health and budget plans

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY
Associated Press

Many people start the new year thinking about ways to improve their health, be more organized and manage their finances. Experts say there is one area that touches on each of those resolutions — home care.

Early and routine home maintenance goes beyond fixing visible damage. It helps ensure a healthy living environment, extends the life of a home and can protect its long-term value, according to real estate professionals. Planning ahead for regular upkeep and for unexpected emergencies can reduce the risk of costly repairs later and help spread expenses more evenly throughout the year.

According to research by the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency, about three-quarters of existing homes are expected to still be in use in 2050.

An installer climbs into an attic with parts of a new HVAC system that was installed in a residential home in Fate, Texas, on Wednesday, July 30, 2025.

Associated Press

"Maintaining the homes that we have is really essential to protecting our health and our well-being," said Amanda Reddy, executive director of the National Center for Healthy Housing, an organization that researches and advocates for reducing housing-related health disparities.

Despite who owns the property, Reddy says, keeping residences dry, clean, pest-free, well-ventilated and safe is the goal, which can mean different types of maintenance depending on the type of home, where someone lives and the time of year. Here's what experts say about home care and what tasks to put on the checklist this year:

Home care includes the big projects and the everyday decisions

On average, Americans spend about 90% of their time indoors, 70% of that time inside of a residence, according to the National Human Activity Pattern Survey.

"It's not just that we spend time indoors, but at home. If you are older, very young, have health concerns, or work from home, it is likely more than that," Reddy said, emphasizing the reason why home care is a valuable investment.

What many people think of maintenance includes addressing water and gas leaks, pest infestations, cracks and other major repairs, but home builders say not everything needs a professional and can include actions as simple as wiping counters and sweeping floors of food debris, opening windows for better ventilation or clearing out clogged filters and drains.

Residents should also consider the needs of those living in the home, commonly used spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms, and typically neglected areas like attics and basements. Reddy says "anywhere we're spending time" or often ignoring and possibly missing necessary repairs should be prioritized.

"At the end of the day, doing any preventative maintenance at all matters more than doing it perfectly or at exactly the right time," Reddy said. "But timing can make a big difference. A lot of these tasks are seasonal or annual, and you're not just going to do it one time. Homes are stressed differently by different times of the year, so seasonal maintenance helps us catch problems before they're made worse by environmental stressors."

Seasonal maintenance to plan for throughout the year

When it comes to maintenance, planning and preparing for anticipated and routine changes in the environment can help mitigate natural wear and tear on the exterior of homes and also create healthy conditions inside where most people shelter from extreme weather events.

"What happens outside the house rarely stays outside the house. What's outside gets inside, what's inside builds up," Reddy said, adding that fluctuating outdoor conditions put stress on appliances and systems at different times of the year. "For most people, the seasonal rhythm not only makes sense because of those stressors, it also just is more realistic and effective than trying to tackle a long, overwhelming checklist all at once."

For example, experts say the best time to prepare for cold and wet climate, storms and other natural disasters is to address concerns before temperatures drop. Similarly, it is recommended that residents address systems in homes that work to reduce the effects of extreme high temperatures, dry and drought conditions and associated risks like wildfires and air quality in the offseason.

Professional guidance from home inspectors, builders and real estate agents says spring and summer tasks should focus on preparing for warmer weather. Experts recommend checking air conditioning systems, cleaning dryer vents to prevent fire hazards, testing sprinkler systems, tending to gardens and plants around homes' exterior and inspecting appliances, electrical equipment and plumbing fixtures. Experts also say spring is a good time to clean and do any house projects that involve painting or remodeling since rain is unlikely to cause delays during that time.

In the fall and winter months, experts suggest focusing on temperature control and air quality measures as people tend to shelter indoors during incoming colder weather. American Home Inspectors Training guidance says check heating systems, clean air filters, make sure carbon monoxide detectors are working, seal air leaks, prioritize pest control, clean and repair roofs and chimneys, and inspecting drainage options in and around homes.❑

ARUBA TODAY

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Gauff clarifies comments on American tennis fans just before a surprising loss at the United Cup

PERTH, Australia (AP) — Coco Gauff dropped a post on social media just before she started her United Cup singles match Monday, hoping to add context to her recent comments about American tennis fans. The match didn't go well for the No. 4-ranked Guaff, who lost the first five games and struggled in a 6-1, 6-7 (3), 6-0 loss to No. 42 Jessica Bouzas Maneiro in Perth. It gave Spain a 1-0 lead over the defending champion U.S. team in the Group A contest. But then Taylor Fritz saved a match point on the way to winning the men's singles match and Gauff combined with Christian Harrison in the mixed doubles to clinch victory for the Americans.

Coco Gauff of the United States plays a forehand to Belinda Bencic of Switzerland during a women's singles match of the China Open tennis tournament, in Beijing, on Sept. 30, 2025.

Associated Press

"I'm going to clarify because people are dragging this out of context," Gauff said in the pre-match morning social media post, referring to the "worst" comment she made earlier at the tournament when comparing support for players from smaller countries with the kind of support American players receive on foreign soil.

"Those from smaller countries come with their colors and flags and it is clear on who they are supporting." Gauff said in her post. "I was just speaking from my perspective. I understand the financial aspect of things and know tennis is not accessible for everyone, it was more of a comment for those who are already attending and how I wish they were as passionate as those from other countries."

The 21-year-old Gauff, a two-time major winner, said her initial comments were in response to a question at a news conference.

"I was asked and it was simply an observation I noticed about other countries vs. mine that is all," she said. "Nevertheless I am grateful for any support no matter how big or small it is."

In a clip of the news conference posted on X, Gauff said: "I feel like we're definitely in the tennis department the worst when it comes to that."

She added that at previous team events she'd noticed that players from other countries get more animated support from their fans than the American tennis players do, but attributed that to the U.S. sports fans having so many successful teams and athletes to support. Guaff said there was always good support for the Americans from fans who travel to the Australian Open in Melbourne, "but I would like to see some more Americans if we make it to Sydney (United Cup finals) in Sydney than there were last year."

Quarterfinals

The U.S. team is 2-0 after wins over Spain and Argentina and has clinched a spot in the quarterfinals.

It was close call against Spain. Fritz, struggling with knee pain, produced a 7-6 (4), 3-6, 7-6 (6) win over No. 38 Jaume Munar. He missed two match points on Munar's serve in the 12th game of the third set and then saved one in the tiebreaker before sealing the win to level the contest.❑

Winter Olympics 2026 guide:

All you need to know about the Milan–Cortina Games

By The Associated Press

The countdown is on for the 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy. The torch relay is already underway and some of the top athletes are already making headlines. There are 16 sports in all, including some never seen before, and 116 gold medals are waiting to be awarded when comeptition begins in less than a month.

This will be the most spread-out Winter Games in history: The two primary competition sites are the city of Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, the winter resort in the Dolomites that is more than 400 kilometers (250 miles) away by road. Athletes also will compete in three other mountain clusters besides Cortina, while the closing ceremony will be in Verona, 160 km (100 miles) east of Milan.

Get ready for all of the events with this guide of things to know!

Key dates to know

Competition runs Feb. 4-22. Here are some of the big days to mark on your calendar:

Feb. 4: Competition begins (curling).

Feb. 6: Opening ceremony.

Feb. 7: First gold medal events.

Feb. 8: Gold medal, women's Alpine skiing downhill.

Feb. 13: Gold medal, men's figure skating.

Feb. 18: Gold medal, women's Alpine skiing slalom.

Feb. 19: Gold medal, women's figure skating. Gold medal game, women's ice hockey. First gold medals in ski mountaineering, a new Olympic sport.

Feb. 22: Gold medal game, men's ice hockey. Closing ceremony.

How to watch

Dozens of countries will stream or air each day's events, with some delaying broadcasts until primetime depending on the time zone. That will be the case in the U.S., where Eastern time is six hours behind Milan and Cortina. NBC will carry showcase events at night while streaming sports on Peacock.

Top storylines

Athletes to watch: Two of the most decorated Alpine skiers in history, 41-year-old Lindsey Vonn and Mikaela Shiffrin, opened the World Cup season in dominant form, raising American hopes of a golden run in Cortina.

Eileen Gu is back in freestyle skiing, as is Chloe Kim in snowboarding. NHL players are back on Olympic ice for the first time since 2014 so watch for the likes of Sidney Crosby and Connor McDavid.

People walk through the Corso Vittorio Emanuele II main downtown street as Olympic Iconic neon hang for the upcoming Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics in Milan, Italy, Saturday, Dec. 27, 2025.

Associated Press

Venues: All eyes are on the hockey arenas in Milan, which were still under construction in December; the main rink will be about 3 feet shorter than NHL and PWHL players are used to. And the athletes' village in Cortina is a set of more than 350 mobile homes.

Russian athletes: Some sports federations are deciding whether to let Russians compete as neutral athletes but only after they are cleared by an independent review to ensure that they have not publicly supported the war in Ukraine and are not affiliated with Russia's military or other forces.❑

Steelers, Panthers, Jaguars secure division titles. Broncos clinch AFC's No. 1 seed

By ROB MAADDI
AP Pro Football Writer

Aaron Rodgers and the Steelers sent Lamar Jackson and the Ravens home for the playoffs. The Panthers are NFC South champions for the first time in 10 years. The Broncos are the AFC's No. 1 seed.

Rodgers threw a 26-yard touchdown pass to Calvin Austin III with 55 seconds left and Pittsburgh secured the AFC North title with a 26-24 victory when Baltimore's Tyler Loop missed a 44-yard field goal wide right as time expired on Sunday night in the final game of the NFL's regular season.

"It's pretty emotional," said Rodgers, who is heading to the playoffs for the first time since the 2021 season. "I'm thankful for these guys. ... It's been an absolute blessing to be here."

Carolina clinched its division title when the Falcons beat the Saints 19-17 on Sunday to eliminate the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Denver secured a first-round bye and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs with a 19-3 victory over the Los Angeles Chargers. Seattle earned the NFC's No. 1 seed on Saturday night, defeating San Francisco 13-3.

The Jaguars won the AFC South with a 41-7 rout of Tennessee. Rookie coach Liam Coen and Trevor Lawrence led the Jaguars to a major turnaround after going 4-13 in 2024.

Wild-card weekend will feature these matchups (all times EST):

• Los Angeles Rams (12-5) at Carolina Panthers (8-9), Saturday, 4:30 p.m.

• Green Bay Packers (9-6-1) at Chicago Bears (11-6), Saturday, 8 p.m.

• Buffalo Bills (12-5) at Jacksonville Jaguars (13-4), Sunday, 1 p.m.

• San Francisco 49ers (12-5) at Philadelphia Eagles (11-6), Sunday, 4:30 p.m.

• Los Angeles Chargers (11-6) at New England Patriots (14-3), Sunday, 8 p.m.

• Houston Texans (12-5) at Pittsburgh Steelers (10-7), Monday, 8 p.m.

Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Aaron Rodgers (8) runs with the ball during the first half of an NFL football game against the Baltimore Ravens, Sunday, Jan. 4, 2026, in Pittsburgh.

Associated Press

Led by second-year coach Dave Canales and third-year quarterback Bryce Young, the Panthers are making their first playoff appearance under owner David Tepper and first since 2017, when they lost a wild-card game two years after they went 15-1 and lost the Super Bowl.

"I'm so grateful to have one more opportunity to get back to work where we can get on the grass, go through the preparation and have our meetings," Canales said Sunday. "Once we are in cleats and on that grass it's like the next thing becomes clear, the focus of what we are doing. ... It's like here we go, we get one opportunity and let's make this statement true: 1-0 with a chance to win a championship.

How long can we keep that statement true?"

The Buccaneers (8-9) beat Carolina on Saturday to stay alive for an extra day but lost a three-team tiebreaker with the Falcons also finishing 8-9. Tampa Bay started 6-2 before losing seven of nine, failing to win its fifth straight division title.

While Sam Darnold and the Seahawks (14-3) earned a first-round bye, Brock Purdy, Christian McCaffrey and the injury-depleted 49ers missed an opportunity to play at home the rest of the way. Levi's Stadium, which is San Francisco's home field, hosts the Super Bowl on Feb. 8.

AFC East

New England won its first division title since Tom Brady led the franchise to 11 straight from 2009-19.

Buffalo's run of five consecutive division crowns ended, and the Bills will go on the road in the playoffs.

AFC North

The Steelers won their first division title since 2020.

AFC South

Jacksonville won the division for the first time since 2022, when first-year coach Doug Pederson guided them to a 9-8 record and a wild-card playoff victory over the Chargers, overcoming a 27-0 deficit.

The Texans secured the No. 5 seed with a 38-30 victory over Indianapolis. Houston is in the playoffs for the third straight season under coach DeMeco Ryans and QB C.J. Stroud.

AFC West

The Broncos ended Kansas City's nine-year run. Denver hasn't been the No. 1 seed since Peyton Manning and a stifling defense beat Carolina in the Super Bowl 10 years ago.

The Chargers are in the playoffs for the second straight season under Jim Harbaugh.

NFC East

The defending Super Bowl champion Eagles became the first team to win this division in consecutive seasons in two decades. They missed a chance to be the No. 2 seed when they rested starters and lost 24-17 to Washington.

NFC North

The Bears clinched their first division championship since 2018. They lost 19-16 to Detroit but secured the No. 2 seed because the Eagles lost.

The Packers were locked into the No. 7 seed after Week 17.

NFC South

The Panthers backed into a division title but are ahead of schedule in their rebuilding process.

NFC West

The Seahawks earned the No. 1 seed for the fourth time in team history. They reached the Super Bowl the first three, winning once.

The Rams beat the Arizona Cardinals 37-20 to secure the No. 5 seed and a rematch at Carolina. The Panthers beat them 31-28 on Nov. 30.

After falling to secure a bye, the 49ers dropped to the No. 6 seed and will face Philadelphia in a rematch of the NFC championship game following the 2022 season.❑